

# At Your Service



A Newsletter for the Citizens of Midland, Michigan

November 2005

## Dial-A-Ride: Driven to Help Those in Need

*In the August edition of "At Your Service," we summarized how many decisions for the 2005-2006 City of Midland budget were affected by Midland citizens' input during the January 2005 Community Roundtable sessions. The article below is on the Dial-A-Ride Transportation System, one of many City services that were discussed during the Roundtables. This article responds to opinions and input on the Dial-A-Ride system, and explains how the public transportation system works, how it's funded, and why it's an important part of the city's transportation system.*

During the January 2005 Roundtable sessions, citizens expressed what they felt were the short- and long-term service and budget priorities for the Midland community. One topic that "drove" some of the discussion was Midland's only public transportation system, Dial-A-Ride.

For a quick explanation of how the system works, please review the sidebar article at right before reading on.

### Demand for a Fixed Route

When Roundtable participants were asked what City service they'd be willing to do without if the City had to tighten its budget belt, 7 percent mentioned Dial-A-Ride. Some felt that the current demand-response system – picking up riders at specified locations such as their home, school or office as opposed to following a fixed route with designated stops – did not meet most Midlanders' needs.

At different times in the system's 30-year history, City staff has looked at establishing fixed routes, and in the early 1980s, Dial-A-Ride operated a five-mile-long fixed route called Fast Track that was discontinued after 18 months due to low ridership. Fixed routes have not proved feasible for several reasons:

- *Most Midland households did not use the system when the City operated one, preferring to use their own vehicles to get around the city.*
- *The current Dial-A-Ride system benefits primarily senior citizens and persons with disabilities. About 70 percent of those who ride Dial-A-Ride buses are elderly or persons with disabilities. Many of these riders can't utilize a fixed route system because they have no way of getting from their home to a designated bus stop that is, say, a half mile away. In addition, they might have difficulties with wheelchairs or disabilities that would hinder them getting to a bus stop in time for the bus's scheduled arrival.*

*(Continued on Page 4)*



**Get on the Bus, Gus...** Dial-A-Ride is a demand-response system through which upwards of 600 passengers a day are picked up from and dropped off in front of their home, school, work or other specific address for a minimal fee. The service operates seven days a week, 359 days a year. See chart below for hours of operation.

Fares are reasonably priced – it costs \$2 to ride a bus one way, or 75 cents for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Reduced

fare ticket booklets offering a volume discount are also available. These rates are comparable to other cities that have a similar transportation system.

### *Hours of Operation*

Mon-Fri .... 6:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m.

Sat. .... 9 a.m.-8 p.m.

Sun ..... 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m.

Here's how the system works:

- A resident within the city of Midland should call the Dial-A-Ride office at least an hour in advance of the time the rider would like to be picked up. If a rider can schedule the pickup time a day or more in advance, that is ideal. Sunday pickups must be scheduled by Saturday at 1 p.m.
- Depending upon bus availability and when a call comes in, Dial-A-Ride dispatchers will do their best to schedule a stop at a particular home, school, etc. at the rider's preferred time. If no buses are available in a rider's particular area of the city at the requested pickup time, every attempt is made to arrange a pickup close to that time.
- Riders must be ready to go 10 minutes before and after the scheduled pickup time, as the bus may arrive earlier or later due to the number of pickups scheduled in a given time period.
- A unique benefit of Dial-A-Ride is that 13 of its 14 buses can accommodate wheelchairs. Each year, Dial-A-Ride accommodates more than 20,000 wheelchairs and walkers.
- Riders should plan on at least a 25-minute bus ride to their destination. Ride times may be longer during peak periods.

# Lifting Leaves Makes Landscapes Lovely

## Fall Leaf Collection to Start Soon

Fall is finally here... and showing itself on trees in the city. To help take care of those pesky leaves, the Department of Public Services' fall leaf collection program starts after a significant portion of leaves have fallen.

City crews will start with spot pick-ups in areas where early leaf drop is heaviest. Then, the City will announce a pattern pick-up program throughout Midland's four main collection areas, starting in area B, followed by areas C, D and A (see map below).

When the majority of leaves have been collected city-wide, DPS will announce a final collection round. A streetsweeper will thoroughly clean each area after its final collection.

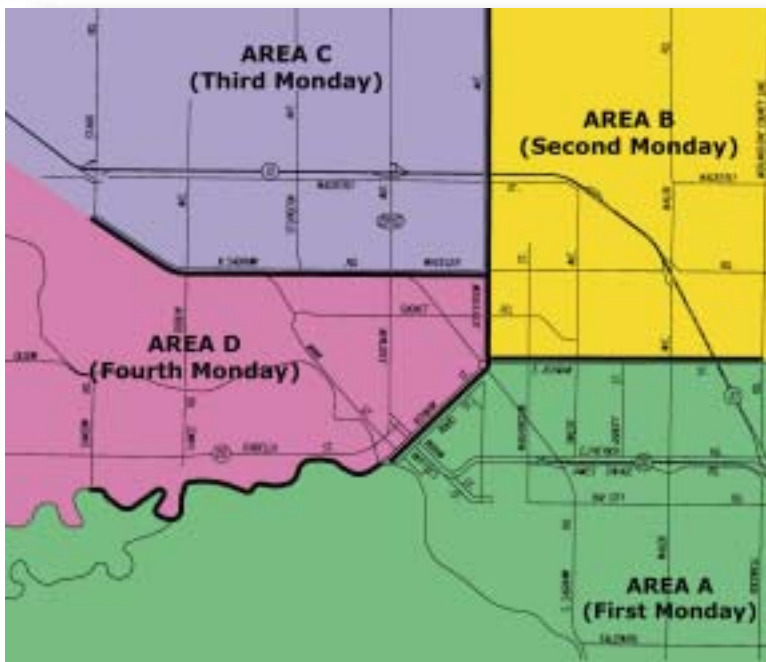
The City's "Three Free" weeks of yard waste collection has been extended to the end of the fall collection season. During "Three Free," kraft paper compost bags of yard waste may be placed at the curb without the regular 25 cent sticker.

Check these four sources to monitor the leaf collection progress:

- **Leaf Hotline** - 837-3405 for daily status of collection progress
- **City of Midland website** -www.midland-mi.org



- **Dept. of Public Services** - 837-6900
- **MGTV-5 message board** - daily updates



## Preparing for Leaf Removal

- Rake leaves into the gutter. However, residents on major streets (see list below) should place leaves on the outlawn, *not* in the street.
- Leave at least one foot of gutter space between the leaf pile and the curb.
- To ensure that collection crews can reach the leaves, do not park in the street when leaf collection is in your area.

## Major Streets

*(these streets should place leaves on the outlawn; all others should rake them into the gutter)*

- |                                                       |              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Ashman St. (Circle to Main)                           | Bay City Rd. |
| Eastman Ave.                                          | Buttles St.  |
| Indian St.                                            | Isabella St. |
| Lyon Rd.                                              | Main St.     |
| Rodd St.                                              | Saginaw Rd.  |
| Patrick Rd. (Indian to Waldo)                         |              |
| George & Cronkright Sts. (between Indian & Ellsworth) |              |

## A Community Dream No Longer on Ice

The new 107,000 square foot Midland Civic Arena stands tall and proud, ready to serve the Midland community after eight years in the making. The three-rink facility just south of Bay City Road near Rockwell Drive opened its doors to the public in September 2005. It features three rinks – two NHL-sized and one Olympic-sized – for everyone from seasoned skating enthusiasts to those who want to touch their toe to the ice for the first time. Call the arena office at 495-0610 to find out hours of operation and activity options.



## Election Time Draws Near

The November 8 Midland City Council election is just days away, and the Midland City Clerk's Office is making final preparations for the election. Here are a few reminders:

### Polls Open and Close

Polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 8.

### Where Do I Go to Vote?

You may call the Midland City Clerk's Office at 837-3310 if you are unsure about your polling location or to check your voting registration status.

### Absentee Voting Process

Absentee ballots allow voters to cast their ballot when they are unable to attend the polls on Election Day. If you are registered to vote in Midland and meet at least one of the following criteria, you may vote absentee:

- age 60 years old or older
- expecting to be out of town the entire time the polls are open
- physically unable to attend the polls without the assistance of another
- appointed to work as an election inspector in a precinct other than the precinct in which you reside on Election Day
- in jail awaiting arraignment or trial
- unable to attend the polls due to religious reasons

Call the City Clerk's Office to find out more about absentee ballots, at 837-3310, or visit the City Clerk's website at [www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org).

### Important Election-Related Dates

**Sat, Nov. 5, 8 am - 2 pm** – Midland City Clerk's Office open for absentee voting in person at City Hall, 333 W. Ellsworth St., Midland.

**Sat, Nov. 5, 2 pm** – deadline for requesting that an absentee ballot be mailed to you. After November 5, the Clerk's Office cannot mail an absentee ballot.

**Mon, Nov. 7, 4 pm** – deadline for absentee voting *in person* at Midland City Hall.

**Tues, Nov. 8, 7 am - 8 pm** – polls open & close.

#### Clerk's Office Location and Regular Hours:

City Hall, 333 W. Ellsworth, Midland, MI 48640  
8 am – 5 pm, Monday through Friday

## Land Use Document Review to Begin Soon

Nearly 10 years after the current version of the city's Master Plan was adopted, city planners are rolling up their sleeves to start updating the land use development document once again.

On October 14, the Midland Planning Commission, City staff and several key community partners interviewed four urban planning consulting teams interested in revising the city's Master Plan, last updated in 1997. Michigan law now requires communities to update their master plans at least every five years.

The Master Plan is an important document that sets forth policy and goal statements about such issues as future development patterns, anticipated land use needs, future public facility needs and economic development priorities.

Prospective teams led by Carlisle/Wortman Associates, Inc.; Hamilton Anderson Associates; LSL Planning Inc.; and McKenna Associates each provided a written proposal and presentation outlining how they would develop an updated plan. The group that interviewed the prospective consultants included Midland City Councilmen Joe Rokosz and Jim Myers, and representatives from the Midland Area Chamber of Commerce, Midland Public Schools, Midland Board of Realtors, Entranceways Initiative Taskforce, Home Builders Association of Midland and Midland Tomorrow.

Because development of an effective plan relies heavily on broad public involvement, Midland citizens will have many opportunities to get involved and weigh in on how Midland should grow, evolve and improve.

The City Council will soon consider a contract with one of the above teams to complete the updating process, which is anticipated to take approximately two years.

Continue to watch for information on this process in future "At Your Service" newsletters, on the MGTV-5 message board, on the City's website ([www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org)) and in the Midland Daily News.

### Thanksgiving Office Closures and Refuse/Recycling Schedule

*The following will be affected by the Thanksgiving holiday:*



**Wed., Nov. 23** - Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Closes at 5 p.m.; Thurs. refuse & recycling collected today.

**Thurs., Nov. 24 - Thanksgiving Day** - City Offices Closed, Library Closed, Sanitary Landfill Closed; Thurs. refuse & recycling collected Wed., Nov. 23.

**Fri., Nov. 25** - City Offices Closed, Library Closes at 5 p.m., Sanitary Landfill Closed; Fri. refuse & recycling collected Mon., Nov. 28.

# Dial-A-Ride Transportation System

(Continued from Page 1)

- *There's a lot of road to cover in Midland:* with a total of 36 square miles, Midland is Michigan's 8<sup>th</sup> largest city in terms of land, but our community has relatively low population numbers (approximately 41,685) given its expansive land area. In order to qualify for federal funding for buses in a fixed route system, the City would have to set up stops a half mile from every residential neighborhood in the City, which would be impractical and costly.

## How The System is Funded

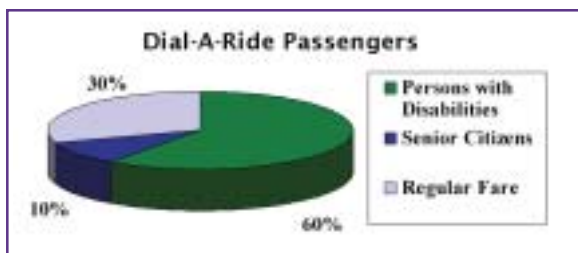
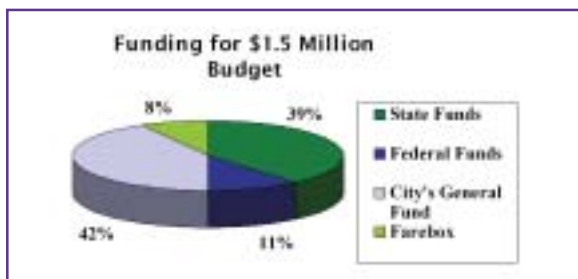
Dial-A-Ride's 2005-2006 budget is \$1.5 million. The City covers about 42 percent of the operating budget, with State of Michigan funding at about 39 percent, the federal government picking up 11 percent of the cost, and about 8 percent covered by fares that riders pay each time they board one of the system's 14 buses. See pie chart below.

Some Roundtable participants felt that because many Midlanders do not utilize Dial-A-Ride, the service should be self-supporting. In terms of the Dial-A-Ride system, that would mean that the City's portion of the funding would come solely from Dial-A-Ride's ridership. That would require a significant increase in fares, but 70 percent of the system's current users – senior citizens and persons with disabilities – likely could not bear higher ticket costs because they are on limited or fixed incomes. A ridership profile is below.

After factoring in that concern, many Roundtable participants took a different view: they expressed the importance of providing affordable public transportation for those who may have no other means of getting to work, church, shopping and other necessary travel.

**What The City's Doing to Keep Costs Down:** Despite increased fuel and equipment costs and decreased state and federal funding, City staff continues to look for ways to reduce or at least maintain costs:

- The City of Midland receives federal grants to purchase buses.
- The City purchases fuel in bulk, which results in better rates.
- Dial-A-Ride relies primarily on part-time employees (30+) plus six full-time employees to provide service to the Midland community.



## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### Christmas Holiday Hours for City Offices and Facilities

- Thu., Dec. 22** *Friday, Dec. 23* refuse & recycling collected
- Fri., Dec. 23** CLOSED - City Offices, Landfill  
Dial-A-Ride Hours - 6AM-6PM  
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Hours - 9AM-5PM
- Sat., Dec. 24** CLOSED - City Offices, Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, Landfill  
Dial-A-Ride Hours - 9AM-6PM
- Sun., Dec. 25** CLOSED - City Offices, Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, Landfill, Dial-A-Ride  
UNATTENDED - Barstow Airport
- Mon., Dec. 26** CLOSED - City Offices, Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, Landfill  
Dial-A-Ride Hours - 6AM-11PM  
UNATTENDED - Barstow Airport
- Tues., Dec. 27** *Monday, Dec. 26* refuse & recycling collected
- Fri., Dec. 30** Dial-A-Ride Hours - 6AM-11PM
- Sat., Dec. 31** CLOSED - City Offices, Landfill  
Dial-A-Ride Hours - 9AM-6PM  
Library Hours - 10AM-5PM
- Sun., Jan. 1** CLOSED - City Offices, Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, Landfill, Dial-A-Ride  
UNATTENDED - Barstow Airport
- Mon., Jan. 2** CLOSED - City Offices, Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, Landfill  
Dial-A-Ride Hours - 6AM-11PM  
UNATTENDED - Barstow Airport
- Tues., Jan. 3** *Monday, Jan. 2* refuse & recycling collected



## The Dial-A-Ride Mission

After much discussion, Roundtable participants agreed that it's important to maintain Dial-A-Ride, as it serves those who may have no other way to get to work, school, doctor's appointments, etc.



## At Your Service

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333 W. Ellsworth, Midland, MI 48640  
Libby Richart, Editor • 989-837-3307

### Midland City Council

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- James Myers, Ward 2
- Hollis McKeag, Ward 3
- Bruce Johnson, Ward 4/Mayor Pro Tem
- Joe Rokosz, Ward 5

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